

REMARKS

The foregoing amendment amends claims 1, 4, 8, 9 and 12 and cancels claims 3 and 11. Pending in the application are claims 1, 2, 4-10 and 12-17, of which claims 1, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16 and 17 are independent. The following comments address all stated grounds for rejection and place the presently pending claims, as identified above, in condition for allowance.

Patentable Subject Matter

Claims 14-17 are allowed. Applicant appreciates the Examiner's allowance of the claims. Claims 3, 4 and 10-12 are indicated to recite patentable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Claim Amendments

Applicant amends claims 1, 4, 8, 9 and 12 to clarify the scope of the claimed invention. In particular, claims 1, 8 and 9 are amended to incorporate limitations originally included in claims 3 and 11. Claim 3 and 11 are canceled. Claim 4 and 12 are amended to depend on claim 1 and 9, respectively. No new matter is introduced.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 2, 5-9 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,668,690 ("Kikuchi"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection for the following reasons.

Applicant amends independent claims 1, 8 and 9 to incorporate the patentable limitations of claims 3 and 11. In light of the foregoing claim amendment, Applicant submits that claims 1, 2, 5-9 and 13 are in condition for allowance, and requests the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejections of claims 1, 2, 5-9 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e).

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue. If, however, the Examiner considers that further obstacles to allowance of these claims persist, we invite a telephone call to Applicant's representative.

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Respectfully submitted,

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